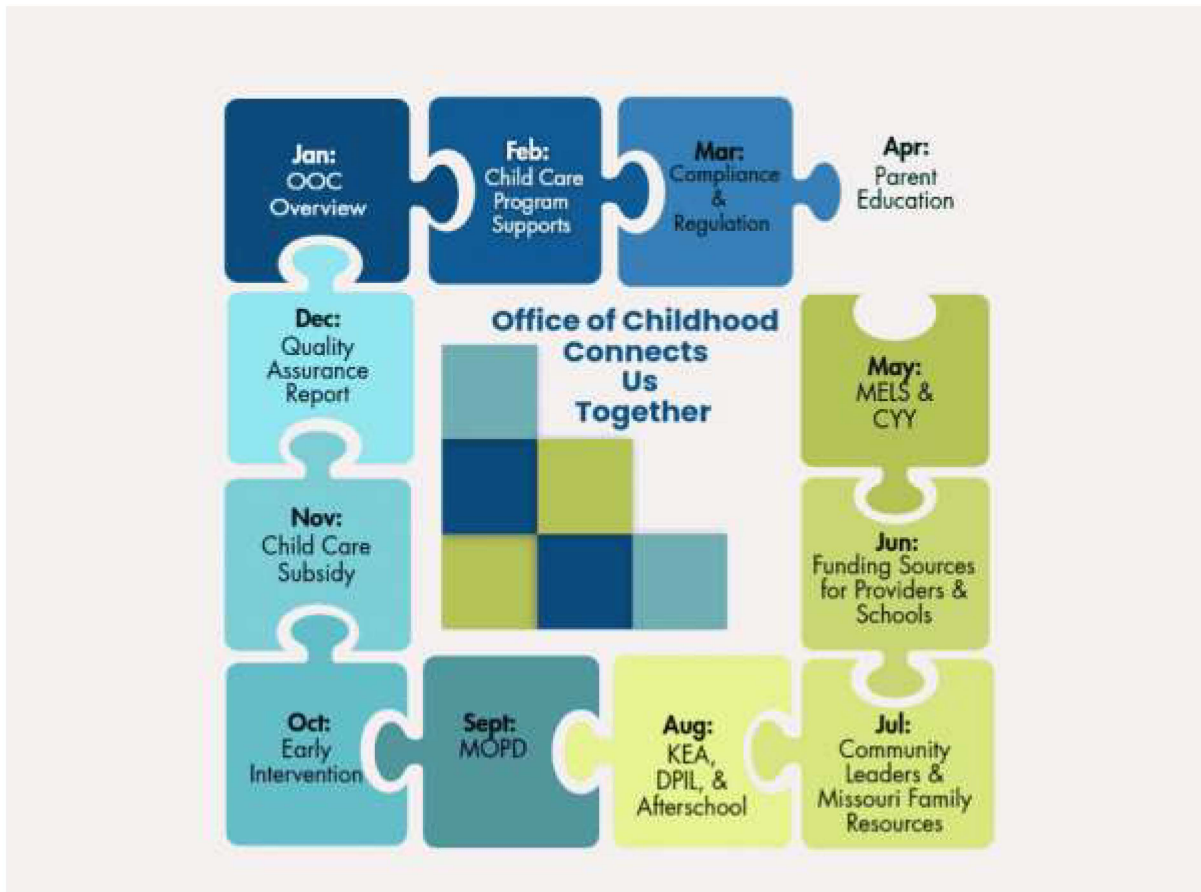




Childhood Connections

April 23, 2026

Office of Childhood Connects Us Together



In 2026, we are taking a closer look at the Office of Childhood (OOC) by exploring different programs that work together to strengthen children and families, and the professionals that support them. In this year's newsletter series, we will spend each month highlighting different OOC programs. OOC is composed of many unique and connected parts, and each plays an important role. Together, all these programs are part of a larger system that supports families statewide. Our intent is to show how OOC programs fit together to create a better understanding of the work.



As part of our yearlong journey through the Office of Childhood (OOC), this month we are highlighting the Home Visiting Section. Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) Parent Education Program supports families during one of the most important times in a child's life from prenatal to kindergarten entry. Research on Missouri's Parents as Teachers program shows strong data results, including

improved school attendance and higher achievement in reading and math by third grade.

PAT Parent Education Program is voluntary and free for all Missouri families through their local school districts. They focus on helping children grow up healthy, safe, and ready to learn, while giving families the tools and confidence to support their child's development every step of the way. Home visiting services help families build strong foundations for success. Parent educators provide support for families to gain a better understanding of how their child grows and learns. This helps families feel more confident in their role and encourages them to be active partners in their child's education.

[Read about this amazing team, what they do, and how they can help you here.](#)

NEWS

Child Care Licensing Rules Stakeholder Listening Sessions



OOC staff are hosting informational sessions across the state to discuss high-level changes to Missouri's child care licensing rules. These sessions are available to child care providers and other stakeholders in response to feedback from previous stakeholder listening sessions.

Informational sessions this week, **April 20 – 24:**

- Macon Child Care Compliance Office (1714 Prospect Dr, Macon, MO 63552) on **Thursday, April 23, 2026, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.** in the Meeting Room.

Informational sessions next week, **April 27 – May 1:**

- Compass Health Administration Building (3515 Amazonas Dr, Jefferson City, MO 65109) on **Tuesday, April 28, 2026, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.** in the Dogwood Room. Attend either option.
- [A Virtual Session \(click this link to join\)](#) on **Wednesday, April 29, 2026, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.**
 - Please [click this link to download a meeting invitation](#) for your virtual calendar.

For all currently scheduled dates and locations, see the [2026 Informational Sessions Flyer](#).

For more information on this project, visit the [Child Care Licensing Rule Revision \(Executive Order 25-15\) webpage](#).

Waitlist for Family Applications



On March 1, 2026, OOC began using a waitlist for new families applying for child care subsidy. For more information, including a recorded presentation, flyers for families and providers, and a list of frequently asked questions, please visit the [Child Care Subsidy Waitlist webpage](#).

Waitlist data has also been added to the [monthly data reports website](#). This information will first appear in the March 2026 report and will be included each month while the waitlist is in place.

Please note: The waitlist does not apply to child care providers who are applying to become contracted for the child care subsidy program. Provider applications will continue to be processed as usual.

Comprehensive Background Check Process Changing July 2026



Effective July 1, 2026, The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will no longer be covering the cost of fingerprinting as part of the Comprehensive Background Check Process. This decision is based on budgetary needs and the large amount of unauthorized submissions. The rest of the Comprehensive Background Check Process will remain the same.

It is important to remember that the [Comprehensive Background Check Notification form found at this link](#) must be submitted and the fingerprint authorization email must be received **before** the fingerprint process can be completed.

As a reminder, the redetermination process for individuals with expiring determination letters can begin 60 days prior to the expiration date.

Determination letters expire 5 years from the date of the letter.

If you have any questions regarding the process, please email the OOC Background Screening Unit at ocbackgroundchecks@dese.mo.gov.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act Report



Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), any child under the age of 3 who is involved in a substantiated case of abuse or neglect must be referred to the Missouri First Steps program. Additionally, the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), Children's Division, requires

staff to refer any child under the age of 3 who meets the criteria of CAPTA to First Steps.

The Annual Report on Children Referred to First Steps due to CAPTA for the calendar year 2025 is available on the [First Steps Data, Budgets & Reports webpage](#).

First Steps Quarterly Data Report Now Available

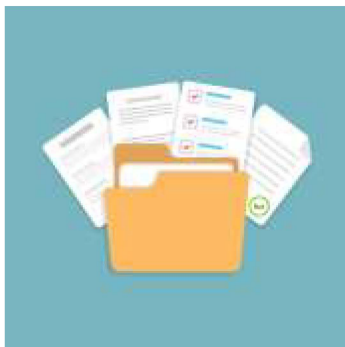


OOC, in collaboration with the Office of Special Education's data team, releases a quarterly report highlighting key information about the First Steps early intervention program.

Each report includes data on the number of referrals received, eligibility trends by referral source, the number of children with Individualized Family Service Plans by eligibility category, and the reasons families exit the program.

This quarter's snapshot, [which can be found on the DESE-OOC website](#), promotes transparency and supports continuous improvement across Missouri's early intervention system.

License-Exempt Subsidy Provider Inspections



Beginning May 1, 2026, License-Exempt child care subsidy providers will begin receiving one annual inspection to monitor both license-exempt requirements and subsidy requirements.

This annual inspection will be unannounced; however, you will continue to receive an annual notice email regarding the expectations of this inspection.

It is important that you complete both license-exempt and subsidy annual requirements when you receive your annual notification email.

Childhood Community Leaders Dashboards



The Childhood Community Leaders completed their [Quarterly Data Reports for statewide and regional engagement](#). The collected data shows the outcomes made between school districts, stakeholders, and early childhood providers with Office of Childhood programs.

Childhood Community Leaders are local leaders in

every part of the state that develop and implement strong community plans aimed at ensuring all families with young children can access high-quality programs, services, and resources in their communities.

For more information on Community Leaders and their impact on Missouri families, [please visit their webpage](#).

New Office of Childhood Email Service

This Week @ OOC, Childhood Connections Newsletter, and other OOC communications will be coming from a new service and will have an updated look in **May 2026**.

Our newsletters will be sent via GovDelivery but will still come from our Office of Childhood emails as usual.

Please contact Childhood@dese.mo.gov if you are missing your typical edition of the Childhood Connections Newsletter after we switch providers.

EVENTS

Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators Learning Academies Opportunity



Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators (MO-SECA) is hosting a series of learning academies for early childhood administrators focused on leadership and business management. The theme for this year's academies is "Together We Are the Early Childhood Superheroes." Join us to learn, grow, and collaborate to create a lasting impact on early childhood education.

The first academy kicks off **May 15-16, 2026**, in Kansas City, MO at Stoney Creek Lodge in Independence. MO-SECA will also host four additional learning academies in June, July, and August. For more information, visit the [MO-SECA website](#).

National Home Visiting Week

The Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals announced the 2nd Annual National Home Visiting Week (NHVW) for 2026. The dates are **April 20-24, 2026**.

This is a time to celebrate and recognize home visitors/parent educators and the important impact



they make on family and child outcomes. The Institute has created materials and resources that are available on their website for programs to use during the [2026 National Home Visiting Week](#).

Celebrate Earth Day with Neighborhood Forest



Celebrate Earth Day on **Wednesday, April 22, 2026!** Is your child care program interested in free, native trees to plant during next year's celebration? Neighborhood Forest works with programs across the country to put a piece of the future in children's hands.

Learn more about their program and how to register for next year through their [Get Free Trees](#) webpage.

Grant Opportunities

Closing Soon! Afterschool Competitive Grant Opportunities



The Office of Childhood's Afterschool Program has **two** competitive grants for school age-afterschool programs that are now open: the **21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC)** grant and the **School Age Community (SAC)** grant.

For more information and to find the afterschool grants' application and guidelines, please go to the [Afterschool \(School Age\) Page](#).

Awards are subject to availability of funding. The deadline for both grant applications is **1:00 p.m. on Friday, April 24, 2026**. Questions may be sent to afterschool@dese.mo.gov.

Missouri FFY 2026 Part C Application for Federal Funds under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



All states applying for federal funds under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are required to make the application for funds available for public review and comment.

IDEA Part C funds support the First Steps Early Intervention Program for children birth to 3 years and their families. DESE has developed a draft application that is available for review from **March 16, 2026, through May 16, 2026**, on the [Department's website](#).

For more information, read [the full announcement for stakeholders](#).

Training Opportunities

The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health: Adverse Childhood Experiences Resource Page



The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health has created a resource webpage on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Learn more about ACEs during the perinatal period and how addressing cycles of trauma can improve outcomes for moms and babies on [the Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health's webpage](#).

Charlie's House: Virtual Safety Experience



Every home should be a safe place for children to grow, explore, and thrive. Charlie's House is proud to introduce the [Virtual Safety Experience app and webpage](#), an interactive tool that helps families identify and prevent household hazards before accidents happen. This room-by-room virtual guide, empowers parents, caregivers, and educators to create a safer home environment for children.

QAR Program Highlights



Congratulations to the programs that have achieved a quality designation through the Quality Assurance Report (QAR). [Read this article for the list of programs](#).

MOPD Monthly Tip



You should only have one active role per employer in the MOPD system. Choose the one that best fits your current position or the one you consider your primary position. When changing jobs, end-date your previous employer/position and add a new employment record.

You can list more than one facility as a current employer if you have multiple jobs. Be sure to select one as your primary employer.

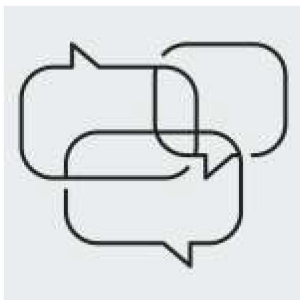
For questions, contact the MOPD system Navigators at MOPD@dese.mo.gov.

Job Vacancies



The OOC is hiring and we would love to have you join our team! Click [this link](#) to see open positions.

We Want To Know



Share your stories with the Office of Childhood!

Submit news and updates about Missouri Early Care and Education!

Or email OOCOutreach@dese.mo.gov.

Miss Something?

[Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.](#)

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